

Kawasaki Z200

ROAD IMPRESSION

It's bigger than an apple, smaller than a giraffe, with silver knobs and orange blobs and metal links all in a row

But . . . there's more to Kawasaki's Z200 than meets the eye, for it's not only quiet and uncomplicated with low maintenance and running costs but it's a reliable daily hickory-ticker whether the wind blows hot, wet, or just plain gruesome.

It's absolutely oozing with commuter appeal – its perfect mingling of economy, reliability and sophistication is enough to make any British daily Railer choke on his season ticket, and there's nothing like being sure of a seat.

It was a bit funny to sit on, at first as everything seemed so close together giving the impression that if you couldn't see it you'd think there was no room for the 2.05 gall. tank. One reason for this is the high handlebars which make you sit upright – tum in, chest out, knees square –

making the rider feel more on top and in control rather than behind and holding on. And it proved a comfortable position for riding.

The first few miles on our test machine were hampered by an overtight steering head which caused the front end to flick slightly from side to side when moving slowly – which was an incy bit worrying to car drivers when trying to widdle past them. This freed itself in time and drivers had no more doubts then – all scratches were immaculately controlled.

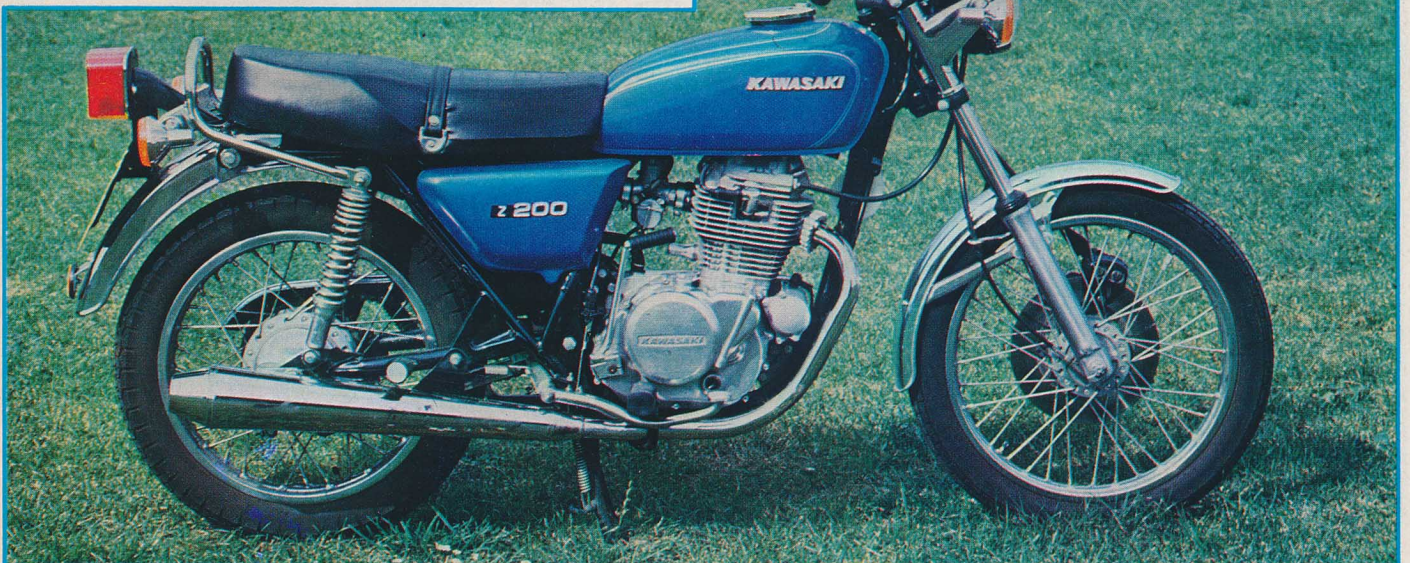
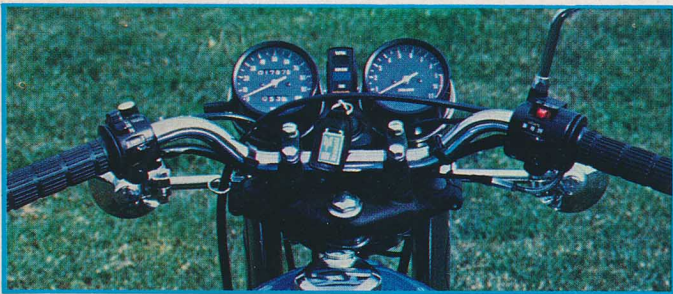
What is most appealing about

the 200 is that touch of extra power that carefree revving revealed. 'Cos being a single cylinder 4-stroker it may sound like a 'Zzzzz200' but a bit of last minute gearchanging and red-lining at 9000rpm would see a healthy turn of acceleration up to 70-75mph. It was possible in favourable conditions – such as on the test straight with the wind behind – to get as much as 80mph though this is not recommended if you're allergic to vibration which abounds at this speed; but is only to be expected with this type of engine. It capably and comfortably cruises at 60-65mph at around 7000rpm with a fuel return of 70mpg.

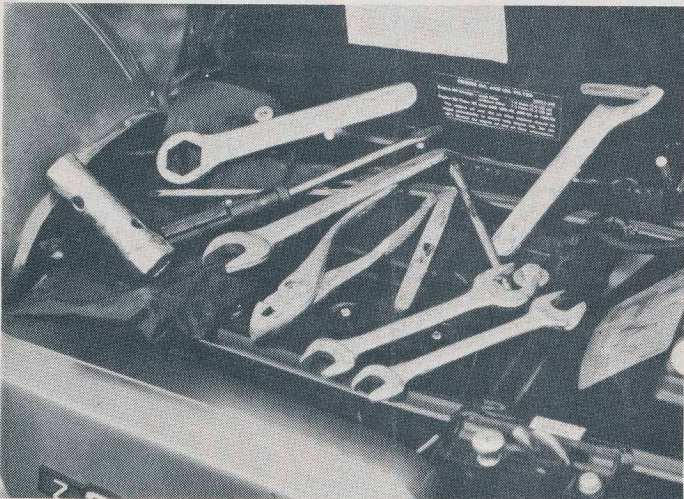
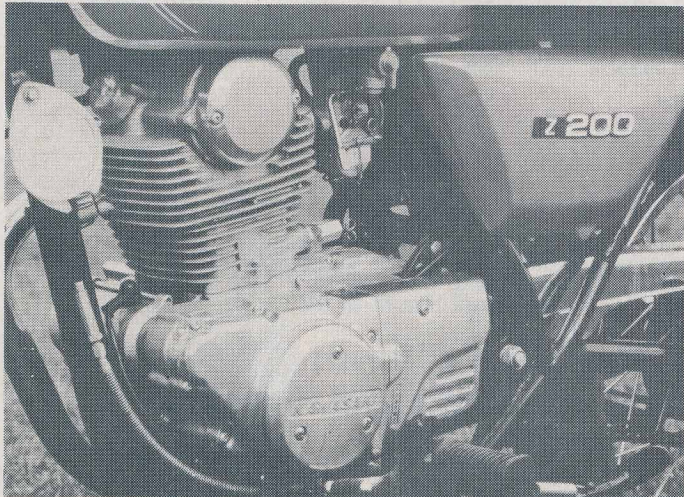
The 198cc ohc motor is manipulated by five easily engageable and nicely spaced gears –

top gear was flexible enough to maintain progress without persistently changing down on slight gradients or for headwinds which easily hampered speed.

The clutch proved something of an embarrassment with its tendency to stick when first started in the morning. It was more obedient after a couple of depressions but was operated with the front brake to avoid the shock of stalling it when getting into first gear. Though stalling it is no hardship; for there's that diddy but rather luxurious electric starter button which is still something of a novelty on small bikes and certainly makes the difference between aggro and no aggro.



Z200 Road Impression



TOP
The single-cylinder, 200cc overhead camshaft motor develops 18 brake-horsepower to provide flexible power for commuter riding and gentle touring of up to 250 miles in a day.

CENTRE
The toolkit provided is of adequate standard to carry out all basic maintenance according to the owner's manual. The under-seat location is lockable, along with the rider's helmet lock.

BOTTOM
The ignition key not only serves to turn on the sparks and lock the steering, but also fits the fuel tank cap. It keeps the joyriders away and stops rubbish being dumped in the tank.

As a short distance commuter it was more than adequate, being of such contentable power and size, but it definitely had something more to prove so off it went on a longer trip to the coast.

The most noticeable niggle was a discomfort of a most basic nature – that of the seat! Though it was good for 50-60 miles, numbness called the tune, and after about 70 miles there would be no choice about stopping. . . .

This longer run on a fantastic sunshiney, just-the-job, type of day gave the opportunity of really getting to grips with its potential as a mini scratcher-hacker. Its steady and responsive handling made short, sharp bends and roundabouts a challenge to see just how far over it would actually go – an impressive pastime specially as on a long journey, with a low-powered bike, roundabouts are the sort of thing you look forward to anyway. But it clocked up over 250 miles in one day without complaint and showed it had some potential as a tourer.

We were very impressed with the brakes – rear drum and front cable operated disc – which as shown by the mileage (approx. 3000) were well bedded in and had great feel. Under firm and persistent application they stopped the bike in good distances from various speeds without locking up.

The handlebar controls were nicely positioned, particularly on the left-hand side with the combination dip/pass light switch which allows a quick flash without a quick hoot, for the horn button is situated underneath the winker light switch. On the right is the starter button, cut-out, and main light switches.

Rev counter, speedo and warning lights surround another gem of appeal – that of the ignition switch which also operates the steering lock. It was very satisfying to be able to 'lock up' without scrounging around underneath the tank as well as being safer than the chancey matter of remembering to unlock it . . . an impossibility with this combination lock which has to be unlocked in order to turn the ignition on. The last notch on the switch is for the parking/pilot light. The same ignition switch key also fitted the locking tank cap and the seat/helmet lock.

All electrics are powered by a 12V 10ah battery and alternator, the three main fuses being easily accessible underneath the seat which is also the home for the tool kit and handbook, with servicing guides.

Kawasaki have certainly made an attempt to protect the absent-minded from the hazards of motor-cycling – even before we set off, for apart from the safe steering lock there's also the three-

springer side stand designed for immediate return when the weight of the bike is taken off it. I don't think ours was working too well somehow, as it needed some coaxing but it's a good idea.

Consideration for the lazy types is a glass peephole in the crankcase – to keep a check on the oil level without the fag of removing the dipstick to find out.

The Z200 looks good, sounds just about and with its PCV – (Positive Crankcase Ventilation) system which recycles blow-by gas through the carburettor (so reducing hydrocarbon emissions by almost half) just about completes its 'nice-bike-next-door' type image.

It's relatively pricey at £529.00 (inc VAT) but it does have a few specials; the bike with a bit on the side for the commuter who doesn't get enough.

ENGINE

198cc 4-stroke, single cylinder, air-cooled, SOHC. Bore and stroke 66 x 58mm. 26mm-choke Keihin carburettor. Compression ratio 9.0:1. Claimed maximum power 18bhp at 8000rpm. Maximum torque 12.2 ft lb at 7000 rpm.

TRANSMISSION

Wet multi-plate clutch and five speed constant mesh gearbox. Gear ratios: 1st, 23.18; 2nd, 15.19; 3rd, 11.41; 4th, 9.22; 5th, 9.90. Primary reduction, 3.29; final reduction, 2.67.

FRAME AND FORKS

Tubular, single cradle, telescopic front forks, rear swinging arm – five way adjustable.

WHEELS AND BRAKES

Tyres: Yokohama. Front: 2.75 – 18 4PR. Rear: 3.25 – 17 6PR. Front single mechanical disc brake – 206mm diameter. Rear drum – 130 x 28mm.

ELECTRICS

Coil ignition, 12V 10ah battery and alternator. Electric starter. Headlamp bulb 35/35w, rear light bulb 21/5w. Turn signals 21w.

DIMENSIONS

Overall length – 1,980mm (78 ins); Overall width – 700mm (27.6 ins); Overall height – 1,030mm (40.6 ins); Wheelbase – 1,280mm (50.4 ins); Ground clearance – 150mm (5.9 ins); Dry weight – 126kg (278lbs). Fuel tank capacity – 2.05 Imp galls. Oil 2.5 pints.

GENERAL

Price: £529.00 inc VAT. Test machine supplied by Kawasaki Motors UK Ltd, 748/749 Deal Avenue, Trading Estate, Slough SL1 4SH.

Merril Boulton. 